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# How to camp and leave no trace



by Gerry Cunningham

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When did camping make the transition from occupation to recreation? For Daniel Boone and the pioneers it was definitely an occupation. For Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn it was recreation, an escape from Aunt Polly and the pressures of city life. The transition continues, and camping has become a form of recreation for millions of people the world over.

Unfortunately, although the transition in outlook is well along, the techniques of camping are still almost entirely those of the pioneer. The goal of the pioneer was to subdue nature, to put nature's resources to work for himself. Whether or not he survived depended on his skill in shaping the environment to his own ends. A tree was seen as something to be cut down so he could plant crops in its place and construct something useful from its wood. A path was something to be widened and straightened and protected from the wear and tear of wagon wheels by a corduroy of logs. These were all logical means to an end. His job was to civilize the wilderness. The pioneer's methods have been so successful that the amount of land still wild has shrunk alarmingly.

## THE ETHICS OF CAMPING

There are some who would argue that there is no need for land left as God made it. Fortunately there are many who are becoming aware that a place of solitude, a place of quiet, a place where man and his works are nowhere in evidence by sight, or sound, or smell, is a necessary haven to which they can escape from the daily pressures of modern life. A beautiful view in the distance is not enough. They want to immerse themselves in wilderness. They want to feel that they are the only human being to have set eyes on this particular vista. It is a renewal of the soul to believe themselves the exclusive beneficiary of the Creator for one short moment. If it could be calculated, the economic value of this recuperative power of wilderness would probably be greater than the value of all the minerals and timber which are so evident to the calculating commercial eye.

But appreciation of the value of wilderness is not enough. If more and more people are going to seek the pleasures of solitude and quiet in wilderness, they are going to have to change from the Pioneer Camping Ethic to the Wilderness Camping Ethic, or they will destroy the very qualities they seek. In all but a few of the camping books found in the bookstores today, the descriptions of pioneer camping



methods are most complete. There are elaborate fires and cooking centers to be built. Saws and axes and shovels are counted as necessary equipment. The construction of natural shelters, rustic furniture and various camp conveniences are counseled with the advice, "Why carry it with you when you can make it just like the pioneers did?" Bough beds, garbage pits, elaborate latrines are all part of the tradition.

And there is a modern technological offshoot that does as much thoughtless damage to the wilderness as do pioneer campcraft projects. Much advertised in the camping magazines are the new "disposables", without so much as an acknowledgment that there is a "disposal problem," commonly solved by throwing the used item in the nearest bush. We are offered disposable flashlights, sheets, pillow cases, tents, sleeping bags, fuel containers, cups, plates, silverware, cooking dishes, face tissues, food containers, towels and cigarette lighters. Two of the more recent products that have found great favor for camping are aluminum foil for cooking and polyethylene sheeting for shelter and rain protection. Judging by the quantities of these two materials to be found around almost any campsite, they too are considered disposables by most campers.

As if this weren't enough, engineering and advertising have joined hands to produce still another wilderness destroyer. Conveniently forgetting what man learned back in Roman times, that the earth must be protected by pavement from the use of wheels, camping advertisers offer us a great variety of motorized vehicles that boast an ability to claw their way into any wilderness area, saving man the effort of walking. Apparently there is some stigma connected with using your own muscles, because these vehicles are considered a manifestation of progress. Their riders might be called the Buck Rogers campers.

Last but not least, we have what might be called the gregarious camper. Their technique copies the Soviet enthusiasm for mass participation, or maybe they copy the popular trailer caravans that are organized to put as many people as possible in the same place at the same time. In any case, large groups do not belong in true wilderness. The organization of "trips" for 20 to 100 people is bound to leave its mark on the local ecology. The tolerance of different areas vary, but it is difficult to imagine how more than 10 people could spend a night in an undeveloped spot and leave no trace.

It is not only the mining, grazing, lumber and tourist industries from which the wilderness must be protected. These are the camping techniques still being taught

today from which it must also be protected. If our remaining wilderness areas are to support a much greater traffic in the future than they are now subject to, we must abandon our pioneer methods and practice the Wilderness Camping Ethic to LEAVE NO TRACE.

Even the dumb animals who live in the wilderness make less of a mess of it than man does, and man is supposed to be the intelligent animal. There is no need for this. Modern technology, intelligently applied, can provide us with all we need to travel through the wilderness and leave no trace. However, the first requirement is a proper frame of mind. If, instead of offering awards of merit to see how closely a boy can emulate the pioneer, we change our goals to see if he can escape detection by leaving the least trace of his camp, the proper outlook will begin to develop. To start off on the right foot, here is a Wilderness Traveler's Creed:

I believe that man—the intelligent animal—can travel through the wilderness and LEAVE NO TRACE.

I will keep my group small.

I will keep my stay in one place short.

I will not cut down trees or branches.

I will not build fires, or if I do I will keep them small and scatter their remains when I leave.

I will leave no trash or other evidence of my stay in the wilderness.

I will LEAVE NO TRACE.

To accomplish this change of attitude, we will need the cooperation of all hunting and fishing clubs, sportsmen's clubs, scout leaders, camping teachers, outdoor writers, and anyone else who comes into contact with present and future wilderness users. The books in the bookstores and libraries today must be replaced by those describing the techniques for camping without a trace. It won't be easy. To build a safe fire and completely eradicate it the next morning is often more difficult than to construct a large fire pit and cooking crane.

The Wilderness Camping Ethic does not mean the abolishment of the skills of the pioneer and the Indian, but these must be kept in their proper place and recognized as "civilizing" crafts which are not compatible with preservation of the wilderness. It does not mean that large camping groups can never be tolerated, but it must be recognized that these create wear and tear which must be confined to the use of maintained trails and campsites. There are plenty of these already available. It does



not even preclude the use of motorized vehicles as long as their destructive qualities are recognized and confined to areas where ruts, erosion, and the destruction of small trees and meadowland is of no consequence. They should be used in areas where their noise and smell won't disturb those who seek to escape from the ubiquitous gasoline engine. The Wilderness Camping Ethic definitely does not mean "locking up" the wilderness. Wilderness will best be preserved by exposing more people to its beauties, but we must do this in the least destructive way possible. The Wilderness Camping Ethic simply says that to preserve our remaining wilderness for everyone's enjoyment we must learn to travel through it and LEAVE NO TRACE.

## MODES OF TRAVEL THAT LEAVE NO TRACE

The long range goal of the Wilderness Camping Ethic is to allow a much greater use of the wilderness without using it up, but the day to day rule of thumb can be more simply stated. To judge any act it is only necessary to ask yourself, "Will the next traveler, be he a couple of hours or a couple of years away, know that I have been here?" If this hypothetical "next traveler" will come to this spot and say, "Hmm, someone has already been here," you have failed. As a matter-of-fact, even though you are using man-made facilities such as a road or a trail or a campground, if all of us would operate on the personal conviction that no one should know that we personally have used this facility, the amount of traffic that can be born by all facilities, natural or man-made, will be greatly increased without the expenditure of a single extra dollar.

Now, what means of travel are appropriate to the wilderness? Obviously, a powered vehicle with its noise, smell and wheel treads is disqualified before it has gone 100 yards. How about a motor on a canoe? Once the wake has subsided it could be argued that no more trace has been left than if it had been paddled. However, the imprint of its sound is so far-reaching that it could be said to leave a tremendous trace of its whereabouts all the time. One oil slick on the waters would also be enough to betray its passage. No, a motor on a canoe cannot be said to leave no trace. I believe the same can be said of snowmobiles, which in addition to sound pollution while being used, often leave summertime evidence in the ground-off tops of small trees and bushes.

Horses, as used today in long strings heavily laden and steel shod, require heavy

trail maintenance. Overgrazing of high meadows has required the U.S. Forest Service to close many areas to horse packers. I hate to condemn the horse, because I believe that in intelligent hands he could qualify as a wilderness traveler who leaves no trace. Using the equipment and techniques of the backpacker, a couple of riders and their saddle horses could cover dozens of miles in a week of wilderness travel without leaving lasting signs. However, in the hands of most packers who make more money from large groups and elaborate camps, the horse is disqualified.

This leaves us foot travel, and hand paddled canoe travel as the two acceptable means that leave no trace. In winter, skis or snowshoes qualify as foot travel.

There is the oft heard argument that "Everyone isn't physically able to perform such a strenuous exercise as walking and paddling." The claim is that these people have just as much right to enjoy our wilderness as the tough and rugged do. I take exception to that statement. I do not agree that if a person is physically out of shape he has as much right to enjoy the wilderness, any more than he has a right to enjoy any other sport for which he lacks the skill or conditioning.

There is more to enjoying the wilderness than just looking at it. Those who think they are experiencing wilderness by merely looking at the view can be accommodated by the many roads, boat rides, tramways, and helicopter trips available. It is for those who appreciate wilderness for its unique values of solitude, silence, simplicity that we work to preserve it. There aren't many opportunities to see yourself as anything except one of the harried herd today. Living in the wilderness a few days gives you an opportunity to be a single individual, yourself. It is refreshing to discover that you are able to be comfortable, amid beautiful primitive surroundings, and completely independent of the accouterments of civilization. We must not lose the last of our opportunities for solitude.

The person who considers himself unable to travel into the wilderness under his own power is probably the same one who plays golf from an electric golf cart to avoid the exercise, uses an electric can opener, electric carving knife, electric hedge trimmer, electric pencil sharpener and drives around the corner for a pack of cigarettes. His longest walk is from the parking lot to the elevator in his office building. As long as progress is equated with not having to perform any physical exercise, there will be people who consider it unreasonable to walk or paddle. I do not believe these people have a right to destroy our wilderness.

However, anyone in this day and age who thinks that you have to be tough and rugged to backpack, just isn't up-to-date. In areas where vehicles are prohibited, a 2



or 3 mile walk will get you away from most of the people, and those you may find at the end of the trail will have walked in and will be seeking the same peace and quiet that you are. Packs weighing only 18 lbs. per person will give you everything you need for a comfortable, weatherproof camp. And these packs are easy on your back. They carry the load close over your shoulders so you can stand up straight, instead of wasting energy by leaning forward to balance a poor load. Wilderness travel by foot or paddle need not be physically strenuous. Many people do it, from 6 year old children to 60 year old grandmothers.

## HOW TO SLEEP IN THE WILDERNESS AND LEAVE NO TRACE

It is true that the Boy Scout Handbook no longer carries instructions for making bough beds, but the same cannot be said for many other books on the market today. In fact, so called modern authors are still quoting at length from Horace Kephart's books *Camping and Woodcraft*, which are themselves still in print. Kephart wrote of techniques and equipment appropriate at the beginning of the century but which are mostly out of place today. It is high time we began adapting our camping techniques to the problems we now face in preserving our dwindling wilderness.

Judging from the condition of the trees and the litter of dead branches on the ground at most backpacking campsites, bough beds are still very much in vogue. More often than not, I can cook two meals with the remains of someone else's bough bed. Not enough boughs are used to give any real comfort. It just seems to be the appeal of the idea that calls forth the effort of construction.

Bough beds do by far the greatest damage, but the old craft of pioneer camping contains many other styles of bed that are calculated to leave plenty of trace. The digging of hip holes, the making of log enclosures to contain the boughs or other padding, and the construction of sapling frames set up on crotched sticks to hold rope or canvas bedsprings are all still advocated and described in detail. Why anyone should go to so much work for so little sleeping comfort is a mystery to me.

A comfortable summer temperature sleeping system should weigh 4-1/2 to 5-1/2 lbs., and is the keystone to a lightweight backpacking outfit. If your sleeping bag is big and heavy, your whole outfit will suffer. I say "sleeping system" because there is more to comfort than just a sleeping bag. A mattress and pillow are part of the

system. The sleeping bag only gives additional insulation to prevent heat loss during the night when air temperatures are lower, and when your metabolism has dropped. Under most conditions, the human body produces more than enough heat to keep itself warm. The heat it produces need only be conserved by sufficient insulation. Insulation is provided by dead air and is directly proportional to the thickness provided. Any lightweight material that deadens the natural flow of the air will act as insulation, but to be comfortable in clothing or sleeping bags it must be soft and easily compressible. It must also be capable of complete recovery after being stuffed in a carrying sack for long periods of time. These qualities are best met by the finest grades of waterfowl down. Polyester fiber is next and urethane foam is worth its weight and bulk only under special conditions.

The fabric to contain the down must be light and soft to allow the down to expand to its full potential thickness. Nylon is the lightest and strongest. As long as the interior construction and fabrics are of proper quality, a down sleeping bag can be machine washed, and should be washed several times a year to keep it soft and fluffy. One other feature of a sleeping bag that is important is that the outer fabric be loose so that the down is free to expand to its full potential thickness. Because it takes a little technique to use a free expanding sleeping bag, most bags are overstuffed with down to make them more foolproof. If the sleeping bag appears smooth and stuffed, the fabric is obviously resisting the effort of the down to expand, and valuable potential thickness is being lost. Most of the other features built into the many sleeping bags available are matters of personal preference and of little consequence to the amount of insulation provided by the bag. If two bags are to be zipped together into a double bed, they should be of the type that allow the zipper to run around the outer edge of the double bag and not up and down the center of the top where the most heat will be lost.

The sleeping bag will keep you snug and warm, but to avoid leaving the litter and destruction of a bough bed you must provide yourself with padding underneath. For many years the air mattress was considered the backpacker's bed, but it had several disadvantages, not the least of which was its tendency to leak. Another was the fact that it was not very good insulation because the air circulated vigorously every time the sleeper moved. Urethane foam has been found to be the most practical material to give the greatest thickness of insulation under body pressure points for the least amount of weight. Because it is not very compressible, its use must be limited to only those body pressure points, or your pack will be very bulky. A pad 1-1/2" to 2"



thick and just wide enough for the shoulders and long enough for the torso is satisfactory. It should be in a removable waterproof cover because it will be used around camp to sit on, cook on, lie on, and many other non-sleeping uses. This pad is much more comfortable than any bed constructed in a campcraft class and will save the environment from wear and tear.

A pillow for the head is made by stuffing your spare clothing into the sack used to carry the sleeping system during the day. This sack should be about 32" around and 20" long. If properly packed, it will hold both the foam pad and the sleeping bag. The trick is to roll the pad up first and put it in, letting it expand around the outside of the sack. Make as large a hole as you can down the center of the pad. Then stuff one corner of the sleeping bag down to the bottom of the hole. Keep stuffing, and if you pack the bottom tight, you can cram the last bit into the top and still close the sack. This is how the modern wilderness traveler sleeps in comfort without using up any of the wilderness he is enjoying.

## WILDERNESS SHELTERS THAT LEAVE NO TRACE

The construction of wilderness shelters is probably the most popular of all campcraft projects. These range all the way from lean-tos made from a single fir tree, to a full log cabin with furniture. In the Colorado Rockies, I have seen the remnants of the former using a 10" log for the frame, and in the Sierra Nevada I ran across what appeared to have been a miniature log cabin that must have used 20 to 30 four inch trees. I hate to mention the mess left at the lean-to, but instead of a thatch of its own boughs, it had been covered with orange polyethylene sheeting which had been left at the mercy of the wind when the campcrafters departed. There was no mistaking that man had used this piece of the wilderness. Whoever he was, he left his big flapping orange mark for all to see.

What features should a shelter provide for the wilderness traveler? Protection from wet weather is the first thing that comes to mind. Fir thatch leaves something to be desired in this respect although polyethylene can be used effectively to shed rain. A less obvious protection is from insects, both the crawly kind and the flying kind. In fact it can be impossible to get a good night's sleep in some areas like Alaska and the Canadian Selkirks during mosquito season unless they can be kept out of your sleeping quarters. In the Adirondacks and the Maine woods during the blackfly

season you may want a good insect proof tent just to eat your lunch in. Rustic shelters give no protection from insects. The last protection a good shelter can give, which is most appreciated in cold damp weather, is a place to get in out of the wind. The temperature inside a good tent can be 10°F higher than the outside air temperature. Most campcraft shelters are pretty open to the breezes.

A modern tent that requires no cutting or digging, comes complete with separate rainfly, guy lines, aluminum poles and pegs and can weigh less than 2-1/2 lbs. per person. A single layer tent that pitches by stringing between trees can weigh less than 1 lb. per person and still have nylon netting for insect protection. The advantage of the heavier tent with the separate rainfly is that it solves the condensation problem. The human body gives off about a pint of water every 8 hours in the form of exhaled breath and insensible perspiration. If this moisture is confined in an enclosed space such as inside a plastic coated tent, the relative humidity builds up until the dew point is reached. The result is a very wet tent inside. Ventilation alone, or making some parts of the tent breathable, will not solve the problem. Wherever moist air comes in contact with a cold surface, condensation will result. It is better in the end to carry two layers. The inner tent is made of a light, breatheable nylon and the outer rainfly is made of plastic coated nylon. This not only keeps the rain entirely off the tent itself, but it allows the tent fabric to warm up above the dew point, so the moist air can pass through without condensing. To complete the rain protection, the floor should be of plastic coated nylon and sewn in all around, preferably above the ground level. Pitched in a sensible, well drained spot, a waterproof sewn-in floor eliminates any need to dig up the ground cover in the well-known "ditching the tent" ritual.

Both the door and the window of a good tent should zip completely shut and be protected by mosquito netting. It is convenient if the door and window open from the top down. This allows the warm moist air at the top of the tent to pass out freely when they are opened just a little way.

There is no need to cut poles and pegs at your campsite. Some tents can be pitched by stringing them between trees. This requires a little searching for a suitable spot, and about 40 ft of nylon cord. The next lightest method of pitching is a single aluminum pole at each end. A stronger and more roomy method is to use two poles running through sleeves sewn to the sidewalls of the tent. Tent pegs made of thin aluminum rod will hold in all firm sods. Loose duff and gravel requires a fold of aluminum or a plastic peg with a little more bearing area. Granted you can save a few



ounces if you don't carry poles and pegs, you will most certainly advertise your use of the spot. At only 2-1/2 lbs. per person, why not be a modern wilderness traveler and use a backpacker's tent that leaves no trace.

## TO USE FIRE AND LEAVE NO TRACE

The most obvious difference between man and the animals that live in the wilderness is that animals do not use fire. The remains of man's fires have been used to trace his wanderings far back into pre-history. The problem is obvious. Man's longest lasting refuse, charcoal, is also the one which he alone brings into the wilderness, and he seems to be quite proud of it. Look around any spot that has been used as a campsite before, and you will usually find half a dozen fireplaces. We seem to have a nesting instinct that requires us to make our own personal hearth before we feel at home in a place. Here again, the campcraft books are at fault. Pages and pages are devoted to instructions for building trench fires, keyhole fires, teepee fires, crisscross fires, and many more. A large body of fire-building tradition has been built up, but only two books devote any space to the techniques of eradicating all traces of the fire before you leave.

Because modern dehydrated backpacking foods have all but eliminated complicated cooking chores, the problem of a fire that leave no trace is not as difficult as it used to be. There are two ways to approach the problem. One is to carry a stove. Unfortunately, most of the so-called backpacking stoves are heavy. Poor design causes them to waste most of their fuel output so that more fuel than is really needed for heating must be carried. Properly utilized, less than 8 ounces of fuel will cook 2 meals for 3 people on a weekend hike. The stove itself weighs only 7 ounces. This kind of efficiency makes the use of a stove entirely practical from a weight standpoint. The key to the efficiency is in the use of a deep well cooker that concentrates the heat around the bottom and the sides of the pot, and in doing the cooking inside the tent out of the wind. The pot requires a lid to keep the heat and moisture inside. To make an artificial fire practical it is most necessary to conserve the heat so that it goes into the pot and is not wafted away by the breezes. If you use a stove you must carry all of your refuse and garbage out with you.

However, we must face the fact that the smell and warmth of a wood fire are two of the simple joys of camping. My wife and I compromise and carry both a stove and

a fire grill on most trips. We use the stove when it rains, or when a wood fire would be unsafe, or when an area has already been devastated by too much wood gathering and fire building. When we can, we build a wood fire. Obviously, if you use a stove it is easy to leave no trace, but to eradicate the signs of a wood fire requires some technique. First of all the fire must be safely built. If the area has received heavy use, there will be old fireplaces. Select the most satisfactory one and use it. If you are in virgin country, bear in mind that the floor of most evergreen forests is made of a very burnable duff composed of the fallen needles from the trees. In other forests, the leaves decay into a burnable covering, so fires built directly on the forest floor are absolutely forbidden under any circumstances. A patch of mineral dirt or bare rock must be found, with no exposed tree roots. Fire can burn along a tree root for days and eventually ignite the tree many feet from the original site. Around streams or lakes it isn't difficult to find dirt or gravel. If the forest floor is thin, it may be temporarily removed to expose the mineral dirt underneath and saved for replacement when you leave. It is also possible to build up a thick layer of gravel on top of the duff, but this presents problems when it is time to get rid of it. Green grass sod makes a good fire base but the fire destroys the grass unless you lay a base of stones to protect the grass from the heat. Every locality presents a different problem. Basically it is essential to: (a) recognize burnable ground cover like pine duff, dry grass, dead leaves, etc. and (b) keep this material away from your fire so heat or sparks can't start it smoldering.

A fire that leaves no trace must be kept small. This also makes it easy to gather the wood without leaving a trace. Any wood you can break in your hands or hit against a rock will be suitable for a small fire. Saws, axes, hatchets and large knives are useless weight to the modern wilderness traveler. A dozen thumb size sticks about a foot long are sufficient for cooking a meal or two, and you gather only enough to do the job. If wood is so convenient that a huge pile can be accumulated, then it will be convenient enough to collect a little more if you run out, so leave it where it is. If it is scarce, then it is best left where it is instead of being gathered into piles of surplus, and left to rot on the ground. Gather only enough to use.

It is easy to build a ring of stones to contain your small fire and support a simple grill for your pots. No elaborate fireplaces are needed. If wind is a problem, fit the stones closer, and build a little higher on the windward side. Flat rocks are easiest to build with, but in any case you should be able to carry them in one hand or they are probably too large to make a fireplace that will leave no trace.



Now you have cooked your dinner, had a good sleep, cooked breakfast and burned all of your burnable garbage and trash. You have washed your dishes back away from the stream, using soap, or a bio-degradable detergent. You are ready to hit the trail again and leave no trace of last night's camp. If you have been a good wilderness traveler so far, this won't be hard. One thing that you might not think of is that charcoal is pure carbon and will last forever, no matter what you do with it. Wood ashes on the other hand will dissolve into the ground with the next rain. During the last few minutes of your fire, don't add any wood, but keep scraping all the embers close together so they burn themselves to ash.

To put the fire out, pour water on it while you stir it up with a stick until it, and the ground underneath and between the rocks is thoroughly wet. Now, here is another thing you might not think of. A lot of the food packing material you threw in the fire looked like paper, but in fact had aluminum foil inside. Rake through your wet ashes and pick out all of the aluminum foil and anything else that didn't burn. Wad this up for your trash bag and carry it out with you. After all, you carried it in.

If there was any unused firewood left, scatter it around naturally. If anyone else selects that same spot, the wood will be there for them to pick up, but a neat little pile won't advertise the fact that they weren't the first to discover this particular corner of the wilderness. The stones from the fireplace should be replaced in their original locations, or if there are lots of stones around on the ground you can scatter them inconspicuously. Each location has its particular problems. It is up to your skill and ingenuity to leave no trace. Next, the ashes and remaining charcoal must be gotten rid of. Since they are soaking wet, this can be a mess. We usually save two of the plastic bags from our food packaging to use as gloves. Neither ashes or charcoal are indigenous to your campsite. About the only thing you can do is to scatter them in the least conspicuous place possible. If you have followed these suggestions skillfully, the ashes will be dead and wet, but this is the time to make certain. You don't want to be scattering any live coals about. If anything is too warm to pick up in your bare hands, it should be considered dangerous and wet down and stirred up again. Large chunks of charcoal are suspect, as are large sticks that didn't burn up.

With stones and ashes scattered, only the fire base remains. Gravel and rocks can be put back where they came from. If a thin layer of forest floor was removed, it should be replaced now. Then the whole area can be smoothed over with your feet or a dead branch, to blend it into its surroundings. Time and nature will do the rest. Sound like a lot of work? Well, it isn't as much work as building a bonfire and a large

fireplace, and keeping it supplied with firewood. A little practice and you do it all without thinking, until you run across a beautiful spot to camp that presents a unique challenge to your skill. Under those conditions my wife and I have gone to considerable trouble to leave no trace, but we have always felt that it was worth the effort.

There is one more subject that should be touched on, considering the American preoccupation with the disposal of human wastes. Any camping magazine will alert you to the fact that there are more brands and styles of toilets for wheeled campers than any other accessory. When you concentrate high use within a limited area, waste disposal is indeed one of the things you must provide facilities for. However, wilderness camping tends to spread the use, and makes waste disposal less of a problem. This is one situation in which the animals leave more of a trace than humans like to. But of all the things man leaves strewn around in the wilderness, his droppings are at least the most readily bio-degradable and will return to nature the quickest. The U.S. Forest Service has come up with the following recommendations for wilderness waste disposal:

1. Select a suitable spot at least 50 feet from any open water.
2. Dig a hole 8" to 10" in diameter and **no more than 6"** to 8" deep, to stay within the "biological disposer" layer of soil. Save the sod or dirt.
3. After use, fill the hole with loose soil and tramp the sod back in place.
4. Nature will do the rest in a few days.

You see, for a skillful wilderness traveler it is entirely possible to enjoy the wilderness without consuming or destroying it. If only skilled wilderness travelers were allowed to use the wilderness, it could bear a much greater traffic than it is now subject to. But, we do not yet have a lot of skillful wilderness travelers, and much damage has already been done. Can we not start reversing the trend immediately? I think we can.

I would like to suggest that all of you do two things when you go out into the back country. First, clean up the signs left by others before you. Ordinary litter is easy. Just carry a plastic litter bag in your pack and pick the litter up along the trail and around the campsite. A few years ago this would have been a futile project, but now the trails are cleaner and my family rarely picks up more than a pound of litter on a weekend trip. The lift you can give to a much used camp site is usually considerable. A lot of the litter will be burnable. There are often the remnants of

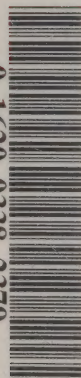


campcraft projects like bough beds, cooking cranes, tent poles and pegs. In most cases these can be used as firewood before any fresh firewood is gathered. If yours is one of those sites that has a dozen big and little fireplaces, you can obliterate the infrequently used ones, and give these spots a chance to go back to nature. Subsequent wilderness travelers will use the one that is left. The last thing you can do is to go through the ashes in the fireplace for unburnables and carry them out in your litter bag. Granted, you can't make a large, heavily used campsite disappear without a trace, but you can clean it up so the traces of man's use are kept to a minimum.

The second suggestion is more subtle. On your way out, stop everyone you meet on the way in and, with your litter bag in hand, ask them if they have any trash you can carry out for them. Many will appreciate this consideration, but the greatest impact will be on those to whom it never occurred that trash was to be carried out and not thrown on the ground. They may have nothing to give you right then, but you have given them a subtle hint that might come to mind the next time they start to toss away a candy wrapper.

The time has come. Let us change our camping ways from those of the Pioneer to those of the Wilderness Traveler and **LEAVE NO TRACE**.

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